



Washington State Public Health Laboratory
Risk and Safety Assessment
Stakeholder Group Meeting Report
September 26, 2008

Overview

This was the fourth meeting of the Public Health Laboratories' (PHL) Stakeholder Group. The group has been recruited by the PHL to assist with a risk and safety assessment. The stakeholder group participated in the selection of a consultant to perform that assessment, and is providing advice to the PHL throughout the assessment process. In addition, the group will provide recommendations to the Department of Health (DOH) on the best way to ensure successful communication, over the long-term, with the Shoreline community.

This meeting served as a midpoint review session between the stakeholder group and the Kleinfelder consulting team conducting the assessment.

Attendees

Stakeholder Group Members

Bill Bear, *Briarcrest Neighborhood Association*

Jim Hardman, *Friends of Fircrest*

Scott Keeny, *Shoreline Fire Department*

Gail Marsh, *City of Shoreline*

Dick Nicholson, *Ridgecrest Neighborhood Association*

Vince Santo Pietro, *Shoreline School District*

Jan Stewart, *Public-at-Large*

Cameron Webster, *King County Sheriff's Office*

Staff

Jude Van Buren, *Department of Health, Assistant Secretary of Health*

Romesh Gantom, *Public Health Laboratory, Laboratory Director*

Lain Knowles, *Public Health Laboratory, Assistant Director*

Terry Williams, *Department of Health, Architect*

Scott Dwyer, *Kleinfelder Consultant Team*

Jonathan Richmond, *Kleinfelder Consultant Team*

Margaret Norton-Arnold, *Facilitator*

Amanda Sparr, *Administrative Support*

Introduction and Overview

Margaret opened the meeting and introduced Cameron Webster, King County Sheriff's office, to the stakeholder group. Captain Webster has replaced Kent Baxter as the representative from the Shoreline Police Department.

Some members of the stakeholder group had participated in a discussion session before the meeting. Their questions were incorporated in a question-and-answer sheet, which can be found at <http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehsphl/PHL/RiskSafetyAssm/faq-phl.htm>

Members shared information about two upcoming community events scheduled for September 27: "Embrace Shoreline" will be held, and a seminar on helping elderly people prevent falls will be held at Pavilion Park; this is sponsored by the Shoreline Fire Department.

Lain reported that the laboratory had been inspected the day before by the College of American Pathologists, and the College recommended that the PHL continue to be accredited. The lab has also been busy testing for West Nile virus within Washington State.

Jude and Romesh recently met with the Shoreline School Board regarding the Public Health Laboratory. Board members engaged in a productive question-and-answer session, and hope to be able to incorporate the PHL into the District's science curriculum.

Kleinfelder Presentation

Scott Dwyer presented a summary of the risk assessment work done by the project team.

The presentation included an outline of the project organization and key deliverables, schedule, and approach. Scott reiterated the goals and scope of the risk assessment, reminding the group that the main focus is on determining whether or not the lab poses a risk to the surrounding community, and, if so, ways to mitigate or eliminate those risks.

The risk assessment is divided into biological, chemical, and radiological hazard analyses. To date, the consulting team has conducted extensive interviews with laboratory staff, met with the fire and police departments, reviewed the chemical hygiene plan, and evaluated the labs' adherence to various regulatory guidelines and procedures.

The assessment will include a look at worst case scenarios. Models of what could happen due to accidental releases of chemicals or other substances will be developed.

Jonathan discussed the approach to the bio-safety assessment, noting that the recently-completed College of American Pathologists inspection is extremely comprehensive, and that receiving high marks on that inspection is a testament to the PHL's operation. Among other tasks, Jonathan is evaluating safety manuals and reviewing architectural drawings for the proposed laboratory expansion project.

The Kleinfelder team is also conducting a comparative analysis of Public Health Labs around the country, and is interviewing selected labs on their practices and safety protocols.

Group Member Comments and Questions

After the presentation, group members asked questions and shared their comments:

Will the analysis include evacuation plans for Fircrest in the event of a worst case scenario? No, Fircrest's evacuation plans are outside of Kleinfelder's scope of work, but the risk assessment will determine if the PHL poses any risk to Fircrest School.

Has the team reviewed the Lab's standard operating procedures for the use of select agents? Yes, and this laboratory has among the most robust procedures of any we have seen around the country.

Are laboratory hiring practices and employee background checks going to be reviewed? Yes, the team is reviewing hiring practices, contract employees, how workforce problems are identified, and the programs provided to assist employees who may have mental health issues.

Jonathan further commented that an element he finds quite positive is the longevity of employees, and the fact that the turnover rate is very low. He has been impressed with the "sense of family" at the lab. People are supportive, take care of each other and seem well connected to one another.

Is the laboratory building directly wired with an alarm to the police station? The PHL has an alarm and a fire sprinkler system. The alarm system notifies a security company, which in turn notifies law enforcement or the fire department.

Does the assessment include a comparative analysis with other potential targets in the community? No, the Kleinfelder team is focused only on the Public Health Lab.

How do employees access Material Safety Data Sheets? Those sheets are stored in close proximity to laboratory chemicals.

Vince noted that his high school is networked into a system that provides emergency responders with a computerized map of the school's floor plan. Lain said he would look into networking the PHL into that system.

Do any of the scenarios address wastewater runoff, or a spill that could contaminate ground water or local freshwater sources? Yes, we will include that in the assessment.

What about an earthquake analysis? Yes, that is included.

Scott explained that the risk assessment report will include an executive summary, descriptions of the methods and results used, and detailed appendices of all the analysis and research conducted.

City of Shoreline Emergency Response to Unknown Substances

Cameron Webster and Gail Marsh described emergency response procedures related to reported unknown substances, assisted by Captain Noel Freiburger of the King County Sheriff's office.

Eighteen people within the Sheriff's Department are highly trained in hazardous materials. They follow a tightly prescriptive method with unknown substances, for example, taking a minute amount via a swab, then packaging that swab in a number of containers.

Gail and Cameron reminded the group that emergency responders do not want to endanger themselves OR the community, and that they take every precaution possible to ensure public safety.

The Public Health Laboratory is on a "critical infrastructure" list for the City of Shoreline. This list includes water towers, electricity transmission lines, hospitals, and other important public facilities. There have been no known terrorist threats to the Lab.

Suspected radiological contaminants would not be brought to the PHL for testing, although the Lab does test soil and air samples if a release has been suspected in a particular geographic area. Plutonium would also not come directly to the PHL, but blood or serum samples might be tested to see if plutonium is present.

The transport of any hazardous materials is done with extreme caution and care; for example, only very small amounts are transported, and they are packed in multiple layers of material.

In addition to the Public Health Laboratory, the Washington State Patrol operates a crime laboratory that is also used to test samples of unknown materials.

Multi-Project Timeline

Lain provided the group with a timeline showing the intersection between the risk and safety assessment, the laboratory Master Plan, the lab expansion project, and the Fircrest Master Plan.

An "early site package," also included on the timeline, is related to the relocation of underground utilities and other site improvements on PHL property.

Dick Nicholson urged laboratory staff to dovetail the PHL Master Plan with the city's sub-area plan currently underway.

The Public Health Laboratory Master Plan will identify potential improvements over the next twenty years.

November 6 Community Meeting

The stakeholder group provided their ideas on the upcoming November 6 meeting related to the risk and safety assessment.

- Be up front with the attendees and be very clear on the purpose of the meeting.
- Use the advertising to encourage people to read the risk assessment report before they come to the meeting.
- Put information in community newspapers and newsletters.
- Contact Nora Smith at the City of Shoreline; she is a good resource.
- Neighborhood Association leaders will get information out to their members.
- Create a “Frequently Asked Questions” sheet to deal with general questions about the PHL.
- Organize tours prior to the meeting.
- The stakeholder group should “host” the meeting.

Public Comment

Bill Anderson, Friends of Fircrest, complimented everyone on a very productive meeting.

Next Steps

The draft report from Kleinfelder will be released on October 17 to the stakeholder group, and will also be posted on the PHL website shortly thereafter.

The stakeholder group will meet to review and discuss the draft report on Thursday, October 23, from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m.

The Public Health Laboratory will hold a community meeting on Thursday, November 6 on the risk and safety assessment.